

Hawaii MARINE LIFESTYLES

HAWAII MARINE B SECTION

JUNE 15, 2007

Do go chasing waterfalls

This part of the trail may seem somewhat innocent but the rocks can be slippery at times, and the roots will try to trip you occasionally.



Follow Maunawili Falls trails to get there

Story and Photos by
Lance Cpl. Edward C. deBree
Combat Correspondent

Pack your backpack, put on that old pair of boots, drive to Kailua, and you will come across a place where trees are predominate, hills wait around every corner, and Maunawili Stream zigzags its way to the Maunawili Waterfall.

Maunawili Falls trail is located approximately 20 minutes away from Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Maunawili Road.

Before entering the trail, signs give a brief history of the area when it was used as a cattle ranch from 1859 until the beginning of World War II. Today, it is a recreational spot for hikers of all ages to enjoy.

"It's a pretty good hike; not too hard and not too easy," said Cpl. Jeffrey Caraway, illustrator, Combat Camera, Headquarters Battalion, and avid hiker. "It has very pretty scenery. I've probably hiked up that trail 12 times now."

There are many hills and stream crossings along the trail, and it is recommended that hikers bring water and wear shoes.

"People should not wear local slippers on this hike," said Caraway. "Along the trail you can see sandals torn up and tossed to the side because they

can't handle the terrain. The path is mostly muddy and the rocks to cross the stream can be very slippery."

When hikers finish trekking up hills and crossing streams, they will find themselves at the end of the mile-and-a-half long trail at the base of a 12-foot-tall waterfall that leads into a pool at the bottom.

"If you're not scared then do it, if you are then don't," said Lance Cpl. James A. Peacock, engineer mechanic, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24. "I've done this hike about four times. This is a fun hike."

Before jumping in, swimmers should check the pool for its depth and be sure there are no rocks or other protrusions in the way, to prevent injuries.

There is also a natural waterslide that leads to the pool if adventurers search beyond the waterfall. Hikers can also find hidden features along the trail if they look hard at their surroundings, said Caraway.

However, hikers should stay on the trail.

"People should look around them if they hike there," he said. "There are five or six types of wild fruit like bananas and mangos that grow along the trail. That's just another good thing about the trail and why people should go."

There is one rule about the trail that hikers should be aware and follow -- don't litter.

"This is one of those places that is beautiful and people shouldn't ruin that by leaving their trash there," said Caraway. "One of the rules the signs reads before going on the trail is 'bring everything back that you brought in with you.' That's something people should know and listen to."

Another tip that hikers should take into thought is safety. The trail consists of many hills and slippery rocks. That's why hikers should bring a friend, said Peacock.

Hikers should also be aware that leptospirosis has been found in the waters as recently as last year.

The rare disease is found in fresh water and can cause meningitis, respiratory difficulty and a variety of other complications.

For direction to Maunawili Falls, go to <http://www.backyardoahu.com>.



Diving from Maunawili Falls can be fun but can also be dangerous if you don't take the proper precautions. Checking the depth of the water and ensuring there are no rocks jutting up from underneath the water should be done first.



After what seems like miles of hiking, you will come across this bubbling stream... about four times. Be wary when crossing though; the rocks can be quite slippery.



The end of the trail is in sight. Just a few more yards and the pool at the bottom of the falls is within reach. It might be advisable to go on the weekdays, if you have the time, because it can become a little bit crowded on the weekends. Be sure to bring water on your hike.

Marine gets BOOST to be an officer

Christine Cabalo

Photojournalist

Whenever Sgt. Ronald Castro felt intimidated by trying to gain higher education, he thought of his family.

He said without their support, he would have never taken the plunge into getting a college degree through the Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training Program also known as BOOST.

“It’s a preparation course to get ready for the program you need to become an officer,” said Castro, administrator, Hawaii Installation Personnel Administration Center. “If you’ve been out of high school for a while or you didn’t have a real strong educational background, they can put you in BOOST to bring you up to standards.”

The 26-year-old from Visalia, Calif., said his wife and three children are his front line supporters.

“He made this decision with his wife when the opportunity to enter the program became available,” said Master Sgt. John Hamilton, Senior Enlisted Advisor. “That’s something I admire.”

Castro’s children are his driving force when he gets up in the morning, he said.

Castro has their picture next to his bed, and he said seeing it when he wakes up in the morning is a reminder of why he does what he does.

The sergeant said he was inspired to seek more college education when his mother graduated with a

bachelor’s degree in her 30s.

He said, as a child living in the Central Valley area of California, it was challenging for him due to the neighborhood’s poverty. His acceptance into BOOST is a significant step to fulfilling a lifelong dream.

“Ever since I was a little kid – I’ve always wanted to go to Boston College,” Castro said. “I used to watch football and see them playing Norte Dame.”

While preparing his application for BOOST, Castro said he felt nervous when he had to hand write an essay in pen. Applicants were instructed to write a 1,000-word essay about their background and family life. The process was nerve-racking for him. If he messed up one cursive word, he’d insist on restarting the essay.

Hamilton said the sergeant’s acceptance into the program was well deserved because of Castro’s dedication to quality.

“He’s always very professional,” he said. “He’s got the ability to stay composed whatever the situation may be, and whatever needs to be done gets done.”

Hamilton said the sergeant’s technical skills have helped HIPAC be much more efficient for customers.

He said Castro was influential in making database information easier to search, making processes a matter of a few minutes.

Despite his in-depth computer skills, Castro said he initially wondered if going to a large school such

as Boston College would be possible for him.

“The whole college thing actually scared me,” Castro said. “Getting into college was intimidating. Making sure I had basic academic skills worried me. Now, I just challenge myself to do it, and I’m not intimidated to do anything.”

He said his next step is studying for his bachelor’s degree in political science. He said he thinks being an active participant in politics is how to make changes in the world. After a career in the Marines, he said he would like to be a lawyer and work in government policy-making.

“Being from California – I’d want to keep it local and maybe become a representative for my district,” he said. “I know in my district there’s an education problem because there was a lot of poverty. I’d like to look into health and welfare systems too.”

Castro said he keeps informed with international news because events in other countries have a great impact.

His desk is filled with congressional publications such as the Iraqi and the 9/11 Commission reports.

He said he’s had the support of his family to attempt something different.

“I think everyone should try new things – especially applying for BOOST,” he said. “The worst thing that could happen is someone telling you can’t get in. If they give you the opportunity, you need to shoot for the stars.”



Sergeant Ronald Castro, administrator, Hawaii Installation Personnel Administration Center, stands next to his desk with marathon souvenirs. The sergeant said his family keeps him focused on his goals such as entering the Broadened Opportunity For Officer Selection And Training - or BOOST - Program.

Courageous corpsman continues Corps’ values

Cpl. R. Drew Hendricks

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific

CAMP H. M. SMITH, Hawaii — Born on the land, bred in the water and now a lethal and effective hybrid of both – one hospital corpsman has worked through and trained in the trenches to become the dedicated, life saving “Devil Doc” he is today.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Angelo Catindig, from the Philippines, has served three different branches of military service.

His military career began as an infantryman in the Army.

After a few years in the Army, Catindig decided to become a reservist.

He said he had no intention of leaving military service behind. In fact, he wanted to further his military career by earning a degree and

later a commission.

His dream didn’t happen according to plan. Catindig started a family while in college. When his wife became pregnant, he looked back at active service and pushed forward to provide for his loved ones.

Unsure about the Army, he looked to his uncle, a former Navy Sea Air and Land corpsman, who suggested he join the Navy and become a SEAL.

“I wanted to be a SEAL corpsman,” Catindig said. “It was the reason I joined the Navy.”

After six years in the Army, Catindig began the transition from land to sea.

In July 2001, he headed to naval recruit training, Navy Special Warfare Division and then onto Hospital Corps School where he learned the trade.

But Catindig was not satisfied with being a

corpsman. The chance to become a SEAL, more importantly a SEAL corpsman, was his ultimate goal.

After six grueling months toiling through Basic Underwater Demolition School, the SEAL training school, Catindig took a 30-foot fall from the top of an obstacle course, fracturing his ankle.

As much as Catindig wanted to become a SEAL corpsman, fate, it seemed, had other plans for him.

His life and his military career as he knew it shattered along with his ankle.

“I was dazed and incoherent,” Catindig said. “I took a pretty big blow to the head along with fracturing my ankle.”

Two weeks was all Catindig had left of training before the fall landed him at sick bay.

Still, Catindig would have to start training from the beginning to fulfill his dream of becoming a SEAL corpsman.

“My uncle said that getting into the training was easy,” Catindig said. “Staying in, it is the hard part.”

Undaunted, Catindig pushed forward toward his goal.

“I healed up and tried again,” the kind-faced Doc said.

This time around Catindig did not have to run far to earn another disappointment.

“During a run, I re-fractured my foot and couldn’t complete the training,” he said.

With his ankle and his goal in shambles, he remained upbeat and positive about the direction his career would take him.

“It just wasn’t meant to be,” he said. “If I got that far and didn’t make it because of one incident, I must have been needed elsewhere.”

For Catindig, elsewhere meant back to land, but this time he had a chance to serve with an amphibious group of warriors – the Marines.

“It suits him,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Jed Cayanan, hospital corpsman, battalion aid station, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific. “Sometimes I see him more as a Marine than a corpsman.”

Catindig’s first taste of the Corps was with 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

“Cat,” as he is known here, spent his time serving with Marines in areas of intense combat in Iraq.

According to Petty Officer 2nd Class Omar Provencio, the Marines are fortunate Catindig took the path he did.

“He is willing to lay his life down for those Marines,” Provencio said. “He is a highly dedicated individual.”

Catindig’s first deployment to Iraq was with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit landing team. He conducted patrols and raids alongside his Marines during the rise of insurgency after

Saddam Hussein was captured.

“Cat” was also occasionally attached to 1st Reconnaissance Battalion and explosive ordnance disposal units.

“We went on three or four patrols during the day,” said Catindig, who was raised in San Diego. “We would come back, sleep for a bit and then do reconnaissance at night for the raid we would do the next day.”

Catindig has not only bandaged wounds and administered intravenous drips in combat, he continued his pursuit of excellence in training as well.

With additional training Catindig took one more trip to the desert. This time he was attached to 1st Recon Battalion.

During that time, his unit was credited with the capture of numerous insurgents. Catindig was also recognized for his part in capturing high-profile targets while serving with the Marines in Mamadia, Southern Baghdad, Iraq.

“Cat” left the field to serve at the 1st Regimental Aid Station as the assistant leading petty officer.

Once more, his path took an abrupt turn. Catindig began to consider leaving the armed forces to become a police officer in San Diego, when a fellow corpsman led him here.

“I was on my way to getting out when HM3 [Jeffery] Galan told me about the gig here,” he said. “He told me Hawaii was awesome and that I should come be the lead petty officer.”

The opportunity was a great career move, according to Cat.

“When I served with the grunts, I barely saw my family,” he said. “If you took all the days in the year that I was with them, it totaled to only one month. The rest of the time I was with my Marines.”

He retold the story of one incident where his devotion was evident. After an intense fire-fight, Catindig brought an injured Marine to a field surgical unit. Covered in dirt, blood and wounded himself, he dragged the Marine to the patient care area.

With a chest rig of 12 magazines, an M-9 strapped to his hip, an M-16 in his hand and a shotgun strapped to his back, Catindig appeared to be an infantryman helping a fellow grunt.

As he tried to come through the door, the medical staff told him to stop. Marines were not allowed in the patient treatment area.

“I told them ‘well that’s good but I’m his ‘doc’ and I’m coming with him,’” Catindig said.

This story and the many others like it are an example of “Cat’s” will and determination. Each time he has been faced with a challenge, he has refused to quit, and each one has left its mark on him.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Angelo Catindig gives a shot to a patient at the Camp Smith Medical Annex.

MOVIE TIME

Prices: Friday and Saturday 7:15 p.m., shows are \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for children. Sunday matinee is shown at 2 p.m. Shows are \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Evening showings on Sunday and Wednesday are at 6:30 p.m. and late shows are shown Friday and Saturday at 9:45 p.m. Cost is \$2 for adults and \$1.50 for children.

For ticket pricing, the Base Theater Box Office defines an adult as a patron 12 and older and defines a child as a patron from 6 to 11. Children 5 and younger are admitted free of charge. Parents must purchase tickets for R-rated movies in person at the box office for children 16 and younger. Patrons must present their military identification card when purchasing tickets. Call 254-7642 for recorded information.

Sneak Preview Policy: One hour and 45 minutes prior to the movie, tickets will be issued to first priority patrons waiting in line, then second and third priority patrons.

In an effort to prevent piracy, the following security measures will be enforced on base for sneak preview screenings: bag checks, confiscation of cameras or cell phones with picture taking capability (items will be returned after screening), magnetometer wand, audience scanning with night vision goggles during screening.

The Base Theater and film companies thank you in advance for your cooperation and hope you will enjoy the show. For recorded information, call the Base Theater at 254-7642.

In the Land of Woman (PG13)
Fracture (R)
Next (PG13)
Perfect Stranger (R)
In the Land of Woman (PG13)
Next (PG13)
Fracture (R)
Spider Man 3 (PG13)
Vacancy (R)

Today at 7:15 p.m.
Today at 9:45 p.m.
Saturday at 7:15 p.m.
Saturday at 9:45 p.m.
Sunday at 2 p.m.
Sunday at 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.
Friday at 7:15 p.m.
Friday at 10:45 p.m.

Movie review: ‘Knocked Up’



Pfc. Brian A. Marion
Combat Correspondent

Editor's note: Hawaii Marine's combat correspondents will provide readers with in-depth reviews and unbiased ratings of a film currently in theaters or one of the many classics of yesterday.

The rating system requires some explanation before you get started.

If the film being reviewed is currently available for rent or purchase it will be assigned a certain number of “microwaves” on a scale of one to four to rate its “reheat factor.”

If the film being reviewed is in theaters, it will be assigned a certain number of service stripes on a scale from one to five.

In other words, the more microwaves or service stripes the film receives, the better and more entertaining it is to watch.



Rating: 3 out of 5 service stripes

It seems that just about every day, people make mistakes about certain events in their lives. It makes me wonder if they even think about what the consequences might be?

Most mistakes may have minor consequences like stubbing a toe, getting a speeding ticket or crashing a computer, but what happens when those consequences are not so minor, like the birth of a child?

Whole lives have been changed by a fateful night, and “Knocked Up” explores one of the

many variables of what might happen.

This movie is about a one-night stand between Ben Stone (Seth Rogen) and Allison Scott (Katherine Heigl), which results in Allison becoming pregnant and their struggle to work out their differences between each other.

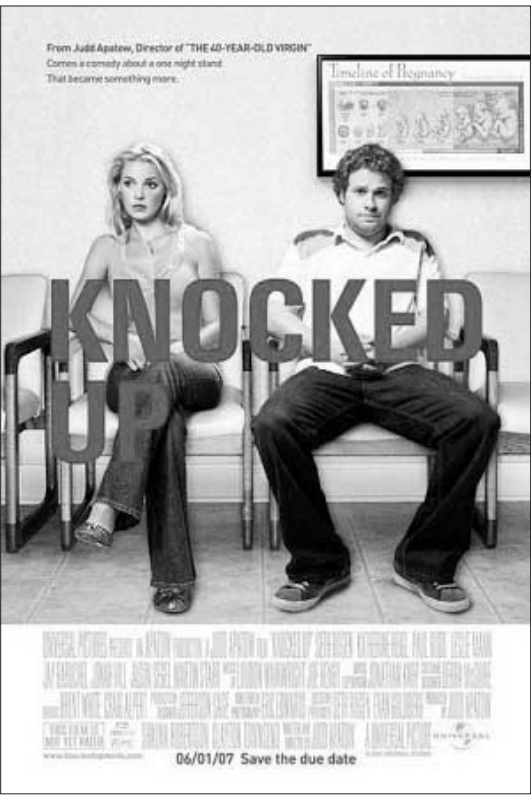
The movie has been tagged as a comedy, but only had a few chuckle clinchers. One of the more memorable clinchers was when Ben played fetch with one of Debbie's (Allison's sister) daughters.

The movie is filled with ups and downs as Allison and Ben struggle at first to come to terms with each other's different lifestyles.

“Knocked Up” was a pretty educational film to watch. It showed what could happen if both parents of the baby took responsibility for their actions. I was actually impressed with Heigl's character when she didn't take the advice of her mother to get an abortion, and I was equally impressed with Rogen's character when he decided to stick around and finally get a job to help support Allison and the baby.

This R-rated movie is definitely not for children. Throughout the entire movie, there are scenes of Ben and his friends getting higher than the proverbial kite, some sexually explicit scenes and crude humor.

This movie hit somewhat close to home for me because I have two friends in Georgia who this has happened to, and another friend in the military who had this happen also. While one of my friends is still married and living happily,



the other two are either divorced or in the middle of a divorce.

Not everything goes according to how people want them to go, but this movie shows what can happen when people take responsibility for their actions, and learn to live with them.

Book review: ‘The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe’



Lance Cpl. Regina A. Ruiss
Combat Correspondent

Growing up, my mom had a huge book selection collecting dust on the living room bookshelves. It wasn't because she never read, it was just she had collected books that she'd already read.

She had beautiful books from the early 1900s, books I'd gotten my hands on and read time and time again until they fell apart. Books like “Gone With the Wind,” “Pride and Prejudice” and “Ivanhoe” found themselves back on the bookshelves after a month or so with weakened bindings and loose pages.

One of the biggest, and therefore most intimidating, books on the shelves was a massive piece of literary genius called “The

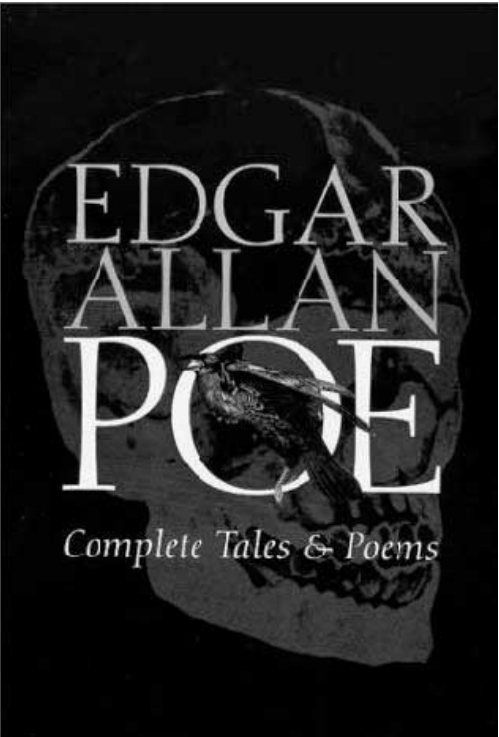
Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe.” I stayed as far away from this book throughout my childhood and early high school years as I could. All I knew of Poe was he wrote that scary poem “The Raven,” which I had to read my freshman year.

His words were too smart, his voice too sarcastic and his mood too frightening for my taste. Every time I looked for something new to read, I would skim quickly past Poe's works.

Junior year in high school something changed. My mind suddenly turned onto American writers like Fitzgerald, Thoreau, Emerson and Williams. Wanting to know as much as I could about American literature, I finally braved my mom's bookshelves in search of “The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe.”

I looked in the index of the book and found it divided into sections. Did I want short stories or poetry? Did I want his earlier work or his later work? Inclined to know about the life of this man, I was excited when my mother said we were going to take a trip to Poe's Bronx cottage.

After walking through a part of American literary history, I decided to take on the book by reading his most famous works first.



I was enthralled with the chilling tales of “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Black Cat,” “The Tell-Tale Heart” and my personal favorite, “The Masque of the Red Death.” I found his style sarcastic, almost mocking the reader to be frightened.

It sucked me in. I would sit there, clenching the book tightly, reading the words quickly, trying to get through the story, not knowing if I was rushing for the sake of ending the story or for the sake of knowing what happened.

I then turned my mind onto the poetry. I read poems like “The Bells,” “The Conquer Worm” and “The Coliseum.” I found myself in love with the way he could pull you into his life through his poetry.

When he wrote of death, it wasn't just a poem of horror; it showed the glory in living. When he wrote of lost love, it wasn't just a poem of pain; it was the triumph that love exists.

My favorite work in the entire collection was a poem called “Annabel Lee.” It's the story of a man who has lost the woman he loves. The premise sounds morbid and a little bit sad, but in all honesty it's a beautiful

poem, showing that even death cannot stop love.

In its few stanzas it tells the story of true love. My favorite line from the poem is, “But we loved with a love that was more than love/ I and my Annabel Lee.”

In the winter of 2006, as I walked the streets of Baltimore, I came across a beautiful old church. Old buildings, especially old churches, are a point of interest of mine, so I had to go explore. As I walked into the Westminster burying ground I found myself surrounded by ancient looking headstones.

I walked the path of the cemetery and came across famous names like James McHenry, who signed the U.S. Constitution, John Stricker, a general during the War of 1812, and Robert Smith, a former Secretary of the Navy.

In the back of the graveyard I did a double take as I swore I saw the name “Poe.” I was right. There I was, standing in front of the final resting place of my favorite writer, Edgar Allan Poe. Buried next to him were his first wife (and cousin) Virginia Clemm and her mother.

I couldn't believe it. I didn't have my camera! Lucky for me, my cell phone was a camera phone, so I snapped a few pictures and sent it to anyone in my phone book who I thought might care (namely my mom). I walked the few blocks to the Inner Harbor of Baltimore, walked right into the Barnes and Noble and searched diligently for “The Complete Works of Edgar Allen Poe.”

I found it, bought it, and spent the next few weeks with my face in the book. Now it sits on a shelf in my room at my mom's house; I didn't have space in my bags to bring it with me to Hawaii.

However, bet your bottom dollar that when my mom comes down here in October, she'll have my Edgar Allan Poe book in her carry-on bag.

Hot Wings for Wounded Warriors



Lance Cpl. Regina A. Ruiss

Lance Cpl. Ryan Irving, Wounded Warrior Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, shows the scar on his leg to Katie Neish, a waitress at the Honolulu Hooters. Five waitresses from Hooters brought hot wings to the Wounded Warriors Co. here Tuesday. After hearing about the Wounded Warriors, the girls decided to stop by for a visit. The Marines told the Hooters' girls stories about Iraq and how they sustained their injuries. The girls played pool and talked with the Marines during the visit.





Lance Cpl. Regina A. Ruisi

Cheryl Jones and her son, Hayden, 20 months old, enjoy the water at Hale Koa Beach Saturday during Operation Homefront.

Operation Homefront serves, protects families

Lance Cpl. Regina A. Ruisi
Combat Correspondent

The weather was perfect for a day outdoors. A cool breeze blew off of the water at Hale Koa Beach Saturday afternoon. Children played games, mothers waded in the water with their little ones, and fathers filled the air with the smell of barbecuing burgers. They were taking part in the Marine Corps Community Services’ Operation Homefront.

The program, organized by Marine Corps Family Team Building, provides events for the families of deployed Marines and Sailors once a month. Marine Corps Community Services assigns a MCCS section of base to host the events, and it’s that area’s responsibility to come up with activities for family members, said Mia Ng, manager of The Lodge at Kaneohe Bay. The Lodge hosted this month’s event at their Cabanas on Hale Koa Beach.

“Operation Homefront is a way for the base to say ‘maha-lo’ to family members of deployed service members,” Ng said. “It’s our way of showing support for the spouses and providing activities for the kids to play.”

Ng and MCCS volunteers at The Lodge put together an event that brought spouses and children of the service members together in the spirit of summer. Velcro toss, fishing games, an inflated-bouncing tower and arts-and-crafts kept the children entertained, while the adults met the spouses of service members from other units.

“It’s nice to see people I don’t get to talk to all the time, and meet others from the other units,” said Jackie Bell, who’s husband is deployed with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 362. “It’s a good way for my daughter to hang out with other children. Spouses deploy and families lock themselves away. It’s good to meet other people who are going through the same thing.”

Bell said events like this help her and her 5-year-old daughter Ivy pass time.

“It gives us something to look forward to every month until those seven months of Barry’s deployment are over,” she said.

Volunteers didn’t forget the deployed service members when entertaining their families. Ng, digital camera in-hand, took pictures of every child, pasting them in picture frames from the arts-and-crafts table.

Young girls and boys grinned broadly when Ng said, “smile for daddy!”

“My husband has deployed twice in the last year,” said Cheryl James, playing with her children Hayden, 20 months, and Mary, 5-years old.

James’ husband is deployed with 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment.

“We’re just ready to have him home,” she said. “These event’s help time go by faster.”

James, along with other parents, convinced her young

children to come out of the water and enjoy lunch provided for them by The Lodge. Children and parents alike ate burgers, chips, cookies and watermelon.

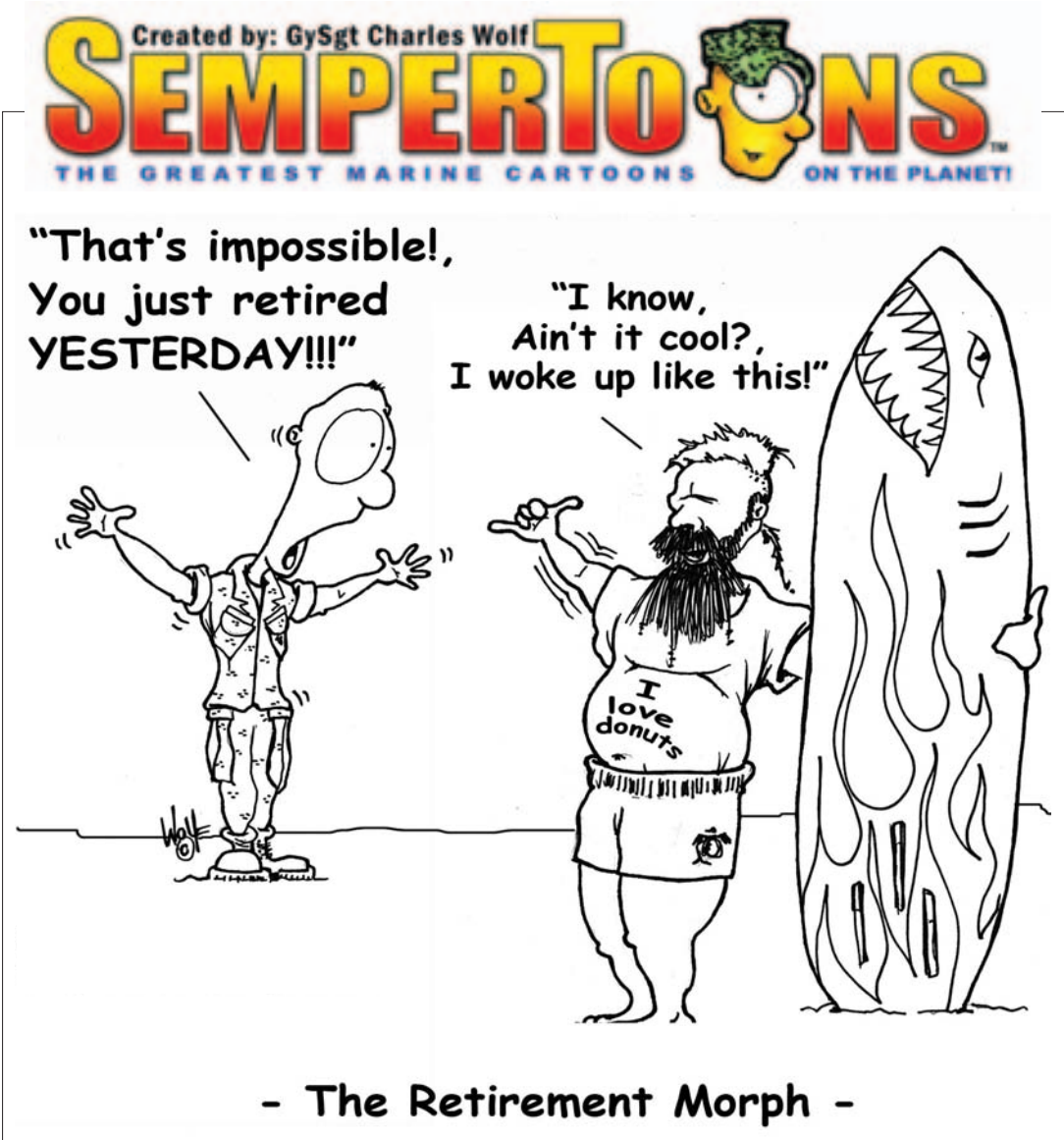
Families from different units, who may have otherwise never known each other, sat together under a canopy and enjoyed the summertime weather.

“It’s important for us to give back to the service members for all they do for us,” Ng said.

“If we can’t reach out to them, it’s important for us to take care of their families.”

Marine Corps Community Services will host an event for families every month throughout the year, Ng said.

The event for July is BayFest. Families can find out about MCCS family events through their deployed service member’s unit, or by contacting the Marine Corps Family Team Building office at 257-2087.



AROUND THE CORPS

Vietnam vet continues to serve, achieve

Cpl. Andrew Kalwitz
2nd Marine Logistics Group

AL TAQADDUM, Iraq — He was born in 1964 and has probably seen as much action as any other service member in today’s military. Even during his youngest years, he carried troops out of combat zones. He now serves with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262.

“Almost every HMM in the Marine Corps has had their hands on this guy,” said Lt. Col. Michael Farrell, the commanding officer of HMM-262.

He is one of the squadron’s most experienced “birds” – a CH-46E Sea Knight that achieved a milestone May 28.

“It’s going to break 10,000 (total flight hours) today,” Gunnery Sgt. Paul J. Sladeczek, the squadron maintenance control staff noncommissioned officer in charge, proudly said before the flight.

The CH-46E is often referred to as a “Phrog” because its appearance is similar to that of the amphibious creature. But this particular Phrog is recognized as ‘the CO’s bird.’ As the squadron’s senior leader, Farrell said he’s “been flying 46s since 1992.” But even his 15 years of experience may seem humble in comparison to that of his presently designated aircraft.

Sladeczek, a Lancaster, Pa., native said the aircraft’s achievement is “not unheard-of,” but a significant and notable milestone to say the least.

So, if 10,000 total flight hours accumulated over almost 40 years of operation isn’t unprecedented, then exactly how long does a Phrog usually function?

“The average lifespan of a CH-46 is Phrogs are forever,” Sladeczek said jokingly.

Sladeczek has yet to be proven incorrect in claiming “Phrogs are forever.” With the exception of some unique scenarios, most of the Marine Corps’ CH-46E’s built in the ’60s are still fully-operational today.

“We have three more aircraft that are going to be over that 10,000 mark by the time we leave here,” Sladeczek explained.

The squadron’s twelve aircraft collectively accumulate



Cpl. Andrew Kalwitz

A CH-46E Sea Knight rests its propellers prior to departing for a flight in which it accumulated 10,000 flight hours since it began flying in the ’60s. Among many other places, the aircraft has flown missions in Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and now here in Iraq.

more than 1,000 total flight hours each month. The CO’s bird alone accumulates more than 100 of those hours, which, at their home station at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Japan, is a third of the squadron’s total monthly flight hours. Between Feb. 3 and the May 28, the bird has

flown 147 missions.

Sladeczek and Farrell both agree that the squadron’s high operational tempo has required proficient maintenance – a service they said has been provided by Marines much less seasoned than the aircraft they repair.

“Because of it’s age, any

problems have been worked out already,” said Cpl. Kyle J. Cox, crew chief with HMM-262 and Green River, Wyo., native. “There isn’t a problem on it that can’t be fixed.”

Farrell, a Longmeadow, Mass., native said if it weren’t for the work of the junior Marines, the bird’s achieve-

ment would be exactly what Sladeczek said it was not – unheard-of.

“It’s just a testament to the ability of the Marines that maintain the aircraft,” he said.

Rather than wrinkled skin or hair in new places, the CO’s bird has aged to develop physical characteristics like its distinguishing No. 8 in reference to Dale Earnhardt Jr.’s famous racing car.

Farell once again said the squadron’s junior Marines put forth the effort that produced this.

“The eight was already on there,” said Cpl. Cody R. Bryant, a HMM-266 flightline mechanic and Accord, N.Y., native. “We just kind of took the theme and just went with it. We did the flag, the kick panels, the decals for the sponsors and the Budweiser ‘B.’”

The decorative paint job exists for more reason than providing a facelift to the old bird. Ferrell explained it wasn’t about looks. Nor was it about his passion for the sport.

“It’s not just the fact that I’m a racing fan and a Dale Jr. fan and a Budweiser fan,” he

said smiling. “They added those touches of pride to it. It lets everyone know it’s theirs and that they’ve taken a bit of a personal attention to it.”

Over its years, this Phrog has seen many faces and places. Among many other trips, it has hovered above the deltas of Vietnam, the jungles of the Philippines and Indonesia, and the deserts of Iraq.

As this CH-46E continues to serve the military, it seems to continue to prove its capabilities. However, as the younger MV-22 Osprey prepares to assume the Phrog’s role, the bird’s retirement draws nearer.

When that day comes and the bird’s years of military service are in the past, its propellers will take a well-earned rest. So, keep on the lookout for old No. 8. You may find it trading war stories on its front-porch rocking chair, getting a round in on the golf course or maybe greeting you as you enter Wal-Mart. But render a salute and give the proper greeting, because the seniority of this bird has earned a respectful acknowledgement.

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